

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), PL 104-208, is the successor to the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and its predecessors, in effect since 1956. Enacted October 1, 1996 and reauthorized in 2003, in unbroken continuity with the expiration of the LSCA, September 30, 1996, the LSTA is administered in California by the California State Librarian. Each year since the inception of the Act, the State Librarian has awarded local assistance grants on a competitive basis for locally initiated proposals which meet the purposes of the Act. Grants continue to be awarded on a competitive basis. California receives approximately \$16 million annually for LSTA. The awards range typically from \$5,000 to as much as \$500,000 in situations such as major targeted programs or efforts having significant statewide impact.

The LSTA provides support for projects in the areas of services for special populations, technology, and resource sharing and inter-agency cooperation. Other changes in the administration of projects, such as a greater emphasis on evaluation of tangible project outcomes and benefits, are being implemented.

The major provisions of LSTA cover:

Technology, Networking, and Resource Sharing

- Qualified projects involve electronic linkages and networks between and among libraries, resource sharing, and public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations.

Targeted Library and Information Services

- Qualified projects involve library services to people, especially those who are underserved, disadvantaged, illiterate, disabled, or who have difficulty using a library and especially those representing diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Eligible libraries include libraries of all types: academic, corporate, institutional, public, school, and special as well as cooperative library systems and networks.

Each year some three million or more Californians benefit directly from a variety of library service projects which, reaching back to the beginning of the program, have included startup of bookmobile service (one of the first "outreach" initiatives), books by mail, and other innovations for delivery of materials and information; improved collections in languages for non-English speaking residents; early reading readiness programs for young children; homebound visits to the aged; additional services for the blind and physically handicapped; and coordinated public information programs on what library services provide. Recently, technology programs have come to the forefront as libraries position themselves to take advantage of new electronic avenues such as the Internet, serve as intermediaries and trainers of the public, and, via both on-site and remote facilities, to empower people to participate fully in the opportunities of the Information Age.

Indirectly, the entire State's population benefits through LSTA assistance to library and cooperative library system operations such as specialized reference, support to non-conventional acquisitions, subsidies for conversion of records to digital format, and underwriting of programs of statewide concern, such as a union database of serial publications and locations. Federal funds used in this way to aid libraries are among the most direct and visible benefits that citizens see as a return for their federal tax dollars.

Language of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

Related to the provisions identified above, the following is the language of the Act itself as it was amended in 2003.

"SEC 212. PURPOSE.

It is the purpose of this subtitle--

- (1) to consolidate Federal library service programs;
- (2) to promote improvement in library services in all types of libraries in order to better serve the people of the United States;
- (3) to facilitate access to resources in all types of libraries for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry; and
- (4) to encourage resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public."

The more specific priorities expressed in the Act:

"SEC. 231. GRANTS TO STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.--Of the funds provided to a State library administrative agency under Section 214, such agency shall expend, either directly or through subgrants or cooperative agreements, at least 96% of such funds for--

- (1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraphs (1) and (2) and inserting the following:
 - (1) expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats, in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages;
 - (2) developing library services that provide all users access to information through local, State, regional, national, and international electronic networks;
 - (3) providing electronic and other linkages among and between all types of libraries;
 - (4) developing public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations;
 - (5) targeting library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills; and
 - (6) targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 673 (2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902 (2)) applicable to family of the size involved."